



**US Army Corps
Of Engineers**
Wilmington District

PUBLIC NOTICE

Issue Date: February 2, 2007
Comment Deadline: March 5, 2007
Corps Action ID #: 200100919
TIP Project No. U-4007

The Wilmington District, Corps of Engineers (Corps) has received an application from the North Carolina Department of Transportation seeking Department of the Army authorization to discharge dredged or fill material into waters and wetlands adjacent to Deep Gully Creek, Scales Creek, and its unnamed tributaries, and unnamed tributaries to Mill Creek, Sandy Run Branch, and Northeast Creek to improve US Highway 17 (N. Marine Blvd.) from the northern terminus of the Jacksonville Bypass to northeast of Drummer-Kellum Road, a distance of approximately 2.9 miles. Other improvements to the transportation network are also being proposed. The proposed project is located north of Jacksonville, Onslow County, North Carolina.

Specific information regarding the project is provided below and shown on the attached plans. This Public Notice and all attached plans are also available on the Wilmington District Web Site at www.saw.usace.army.mil/wetlands

Applicant:

Gregory J. Thorpe, Ph.D.
Environmental Management Director, PDEA
NC Department of Transportation
1548 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1548

Authority

In order to more fully integrate Section 404 permit requirements with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and to give careful consideration to our required public interest review and 404 (b)(1) compliance determination, the Corps is soliciting public comment on the merits of this proposal and on the alternatives evaluated in the Federal Highway Environmental Assessment (EA) that was completed on October 30, 2006. At the close of this comment period, the District Commander will evaluate and consider the comments received as well as the expected adverse and beneficial effects of the proposed road alternatives to select the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative (LEDPA). The District Commander is not authorizing construction of the proposed roadway at this time. A final Department of the Army permit could be issued, it at all, only after our review process is complete, impacts to the aquatic environment have been minimized to the maximum extent practicable and a compensatory mitigation plan for unavoidable impacts has been approved.

Location

The proposed project involves improvements to NC Highway 17 (N. Marine Blvd.) from the northern terminus of the recently completed Jacksonville Bypass (U-2107) north of Jacksonville to Drummer-Kellum Road for a distance of approximately 2.9 miles. Depending on the alternative selected, the project may result in the construction of a roadway (Western Parkway) on a new location extending from the intersection of NC Highway 17 and the Jacksonville Bypass to the north-west terminating at Western Blvd. Extension. Some improvements to Bell Fork Road, White Street and Piney Green Road may also be conducted as part of this project. The project is located on the White Oak River Basin, Hydrologic Unit 03030001.

Background

A Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Environmental Assessment (EA) describing the proposed project, various alternatives to the proposed action, and its expected impacts was signed on October 6, 2006. US 17 is the major north-south corridor for eastern North Carolina and has been identified by the NCDOT as a Strategic Highway Corridor. The project is included in the 2006-2012 TIP with Right-of-Way acquisition scheduled for FY 2009 and construction in FY 2011. Various alternatives to the proposed project have been examined including an extension from the present terminus of the Jacksonville Bypass (U-2107) to the north-west tying to Western Blvd. However, due to concerns over limited use if the project was built at this location, the Jacksonville Thoroughfare plan was amended to show improvements along the existing US 17 with interchanges at Country Club Road, the Jacksonville Bypass at US 17, and US 17 at Piney Green Road. The interchange at Country Club Road was subsequently removed from consideration due to objections from the public. Also included in the Thoroughfare Plan and in the project under consideration is a proposed Western Parkway that parallels the existing Western Blvd. eventually intersecting with Western Blvd. in the vicinity of Gateway North Drive.

Applicant's Stated Purpose

The applicants stated purpose of the project is to reduce congestion, provide route continuity, and improve safety on US 17 from the Jacksonville Bypass to Drummer-Kellum Road.

Project Description

The proposed project involves improvements to NC Highway 17 (N. Marine Blvd.) from the northern terminus of the recently completed Jacksonville Bypass to Drummer-Kellum Road for a distance of approximately 2.9 miles. The preliminary alternatives considered are comprised of an expressway option for US 17 combined with an option to extend the Jacksonville Bypass northwest of its terminus at US 17 (Western Parkway Extension) and an option to add an interchange along the Jacksonville Bypass (White Street Extension and Interchange). The US 17 Expressway is proposed to begin at the Jacksonville Bypass and end north-east of Drummer-Kellum Road at the bridge over Wolf Swamp. The Expressway includes partial control of access, with three grade separated interchanges on US 17 at the Jacksonville Bypass, Western

Blvd. And Piney Green/Drummer-Kellum roads. The expressway is being considered with and without the extension of Commerce Drive to Piney Green Road.

To meet the project purpose and need, the US 17 Expressway would be combined with one or both of the following:

Western Parkway Option. This option would provide a continuation of the Jacksonville Bypass north of US 17. Western Parkway would extend parallel to and provide connections to Western Boulevard Extension. Two variations for the northern terminus of the roadway are being considered: intersecting with Western Boulevard Extension at Gateway North Drive or intersecting with Western Boulevard Extension northwest of Lowe's. The northernmost variations at Gateway North Drive would also include a connection northwest of Lowe's. Both variations would include a new location roadway to connect Western Parkway to Western Boulevard Extension at the existing Wal-Mart driveway.

White Street Extension and Interchange Option. This option would include some new location roadway and an interchange with the Jacksonville Bypass. This option, which would assist with traffic congestion relief on Western Boulevard, was added because of potential impacts to minority and low-income residents and strong opposition to the previously proposed interchange at Country Club Road. White Street would be extended west to Bell Fork Road. There are two variations for the easternmost portion of White Street. One variation is to realign White Street with Huff Drive on the east side of Western Boulevard. (The existing western terminus of Huff Drive would be shifted slightly to the north.) Another variation is to connect White Street with Memorial Drive, which intersects Western Boulevard across from the main entrance to the Jacksonville Mall.

Western Parkway and the White Street Extension and Interchange are referred to as options and the combination of these options with the US 17 Expressway are the study alternatives. The alternatives, combining the options and variations include:

Alternative A: US 17 Expressway/Western Parkway/White Street Extension and Interchange. This alternative combines the US 17 Expressway with the new location option of Western Parkway and White Street Extension and Interchange. This alternative ranges from approximately 14.8 miles to approximately 15.6 miles, including both existing and new location roadway. The eight combinations of this alternative include:

- Alternative A1: US 17 Expressway (with Commerce Drive Extension)/Western Parkway (Gateway North Drive)/White Street (Huff Drive).
- Alternative A2: US 17 Expressway (with Commerce Drive Extension)/Western Parkway (Gateway North Drive)/White Street (Memorial Drive).
- Alternative A3: US 17 Expressway (with Commerce Drive Extension)/Western Parkway (northwest of Lowe's)/White Street (Huff Drive).
- Alternative A4: US 17 Expressway (with Commerce Drive Extension)/Western Parkway (northwest of Lowe's)/White Street (Memorial Drive).
- Alternative A5: US 17 Expressway (no Commerce Drive Extension)/Western Parkway (Gateway North Drive)/White Street (Huff Drive).

- Alternative A6: US 17 Expressway (no Commerce Drive Extension)/Western Parkway (Gateway North Drive)/White Street (Memorial Drive).
- Alternative A7: US 17 Expressway (no Commerce Drive Extension)/Western Parkway (northwest of Lowe's)/White Street (Huff Drive).
- Alternative A8: US 17 Expressway (no Commerce Drive Extension)/Western Parkway (northwest of Lowe's)/White Street (Memorial Drive)

Alternative B – US 17 Expressway/Western Parkway: This alternative combines the US 17 Expressway with the new location build option of Western Parkway without any improvements to White Street. The length of Alternative B ranges from approximately 12.7 miles to approximately 13.5 miles. The four combinations of this alternative include:

- Alternative B1: US 17 Expressway (with Commerce Drive Extension)/Western Parkway (Gateway North Drive)
- Alternative B2: US 17 Expressway (with Commerce Drive Extension)/Western Parkway (northwest of Lowe's)
- Alternative B3: US 17 Expressway (no Commerce Drive Extension)/Western Parkway (Gateway North Drive)
- Alternative B4: US 17 Expressway (no Commerce Drive Extension)/Western Parkway (northwest of Lowe's)

Alternative C – US 17 Expressway/White Street Extension and Interchange. This alternative combines the US 17 Expressway with the option to build the White Street improvements. Alternative C would not include constructing Western Parkway. The length of Alternative C ranges from approximately 12.8 miles to 13.2 miles. The four combinations of this alternative include:

- Alternative C1: US 17 Expressway (with Commerce Drive Extension)/White Street (Huff Drive)
- Alternative C2: US 17 Expressway (with Commerce Drive Extension)/White Street (Memorial Drive)
- Alternative C3: US 17 Expressway (no Commerce Drive Extension)/White Street (Huff Drive)
- Alternative C4: US 17 Expressway (no Commerce Drive Extension)/White Street (Memorial Drive)
- Alternative C4: US 17 Expressway (no Commerce Drive Extension)/White Street (Memorial Drive).

The applicant has stated that in accordance with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requirements, that the project has logical termini, and that the project will be a usable and reasonable expenditure of funds even if no additional transportation improvements are made, and the project will not restrict the consideration of other transportation projects in the foreseeable future.

****A map showing the overall location of the proposed Alternatives for this project is included with this public notice. Detailed plan sheets for individual alternatives also available on the Wilmington District Web Site at www.saw.usace.army.mil/wetlands

The total wetland and jurisdictional stream impacts for the alternatives under consideration, as described above, are provided in the Table (1) below.

Table 1. Wetland and Stream Impacts.

Alternative	Wetlands (acres)	Streams (feet)
Alternative A1	8.26	3118
Alternative A2	6.57	3290
Alternative A3	7.38	2801
Alternative A4	5.69	2973
Alternative A5	7.96	2765
Alternative A6	6.27	2937
Alternative A7	7.08	2448
Alternative A8	5.39	2620
Alternative B1	4.43	1803
Alternative B2	3.55	1486
Alternative B3	4.13	1450
Alternative B4	3.25	1133
Alternative C1	5.21	2439
Alternative C2	3.52	2611
Alternative C3	4.91	2086
Alternative C4	3.22	2258

Existing Conditions

Land Use: The project area is located north of the greater Jacksonville urban area, in central Onslow County. Camp LeJeune, the largest Marine Corps Base on the East Coast is in Onslow County, just south of the project study area. The project area is located within the extraterritorial planning jurisdiction of the City of Jacksonville and has experienced tremendous commercial growth over the last 15 years. The development is comprised primarily of big-box retailers, strip development, and restaurants. North of Piney Green Road, development transitions rapidly towards sparsely settled residential areas. Due to the developed nature of the study area and that the project will mostly follow existing roadway alignments, the bulk of the expected impacts are to terrestrial resources.

Water Resources: Major streams in the study area are Mill Creek and Sandy Run Branch and their tributaries; both are classified as class SC NSW from source to the New River and to Chainey Creek, respectively. Class SC denotes tidal saltwater that are protected for aquatic life propagation and maintenance of biological integrity, secondary recreation, wildlife, and any

other usage, other than primary recreation or shell fishing for marketing purposes. Class NSW (Nutrient Sensitive Waters) classification is intended to protect waters needing additional nutrient management. Wetlands in the project area fall into two broad categories; either associated with streams and adjacent floodplains and sometimes located on Muirville soils or on broad interstream flats underlain with Rains fine sandy loam or Pantego mucky loam. Wetland communities that may be adversely impacted from the proposed project include Wet Pine Flatwoods containing loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*), inkberry (*Ilex glabra*), gallberry (*Ilex coriacea*), and fetterbush (*Lyonia lucida*). Bottomland Hardwood Forest plant communities may contain water oak (*Quercus nigra*), willow oak (*Q. phellos*), titi (*Cyrilla racemiflora*), green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanicus*), and various species of greenbrier (*Smilax spp.*). Due to the extensive development in the central portion of the study area, wetlands outside stream corridors have been dissected by encroaching development and existing road networks. Four of the major stream crossings associated with the project would encroach on floodplains and floodways. The US 17 Expressway would involve extending an existing box culvert across the 100-year floodplain of Sandy Run Branch. The US 17 Expressway would also add two culverts across the 100 – year floodplain and floodway of an unnamed tributary to Northeast Creek. The project is located on the White Oak river basin, Hydrologic Unit 03030001. However, all streams in the study area eventually drain to the New River.

Other Required Authorizations

This notice and all applicable application materials are being forwarded to the appropriate State agencies for review. The Corps will generally not make a final permit decision until the North Carolina Division of Water Quality (NCDWQ) issues, denies, or waives State certification required by Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (PL 92-500). The application for A Section 401 certification will be submitted to the NCDWQ after the LEDPA has been chosen and the final design plans are available. Additional information regarding the Clean Water Act certification process may be obtained from the NCDWQ Central Office, Transportation Permitting Unit, 2321 Crabtree Boulevard, Raleigh, North Carolina 27604-2260, Attn: Mr. John Hennessy.

The applicant has not provided to the Corps, a certification statement that his/her proposed activity complies with and will be conducted in a manner that is consistent with the approved North Carolina Coastal Zone Management Program. Pursuant to 33 CFR 325.2(b)(2), the Corps can not issue a permit for the proposed work until the applicant submits such a certification to the Corps and the North Carolina Division of Coastal Management (NCDCM), and the NCDCM notifies the Corps that it concurs with the applicant's consistency certification.

Essential Fish Habitat

This notice initiates the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultation requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Corps' initial determination is that the proposed project will not adversely impact EFH or associated fisheries managed by the South Atlantic or Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Councils or the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Cultural Resources

According to the EA and application, no Section 4 (f) properties will be affected by the proposed project and there are no known historic resources in the projects Area of Potential Effect. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and NCDOT have concurred that the project will have no effect on any known historic or archeological resources and do not recommend further architectural or archeological surveys.

Endangered Species

Suitable habitat for three Federally protected species, Pondberry (*Lindera melissifolia*), Rough leaved loosestrife (*Lysimachia asperulifolia*), and Coolley's meadowrue (*Thalictrum cooleyi*) is present within the project study corridors. Field surveys have been conducted and no individual listed species have been found within the suitable habitat. Although suitable foraging habitat for the Red Cockaded Woodpecker does exist in the project area, no cavity trees have been noted. No permit will be issued until the provisions of Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act have been satisfied.

Environmental Justice

In accordance with EO 12898, which directs each Federal agency to address, as appropriate, "disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low income populations." According to the FHWA EA, adverse impacts to some minority and low income residents are expected. However, these impacts are not considered to be disproportionately high.

Evaluation

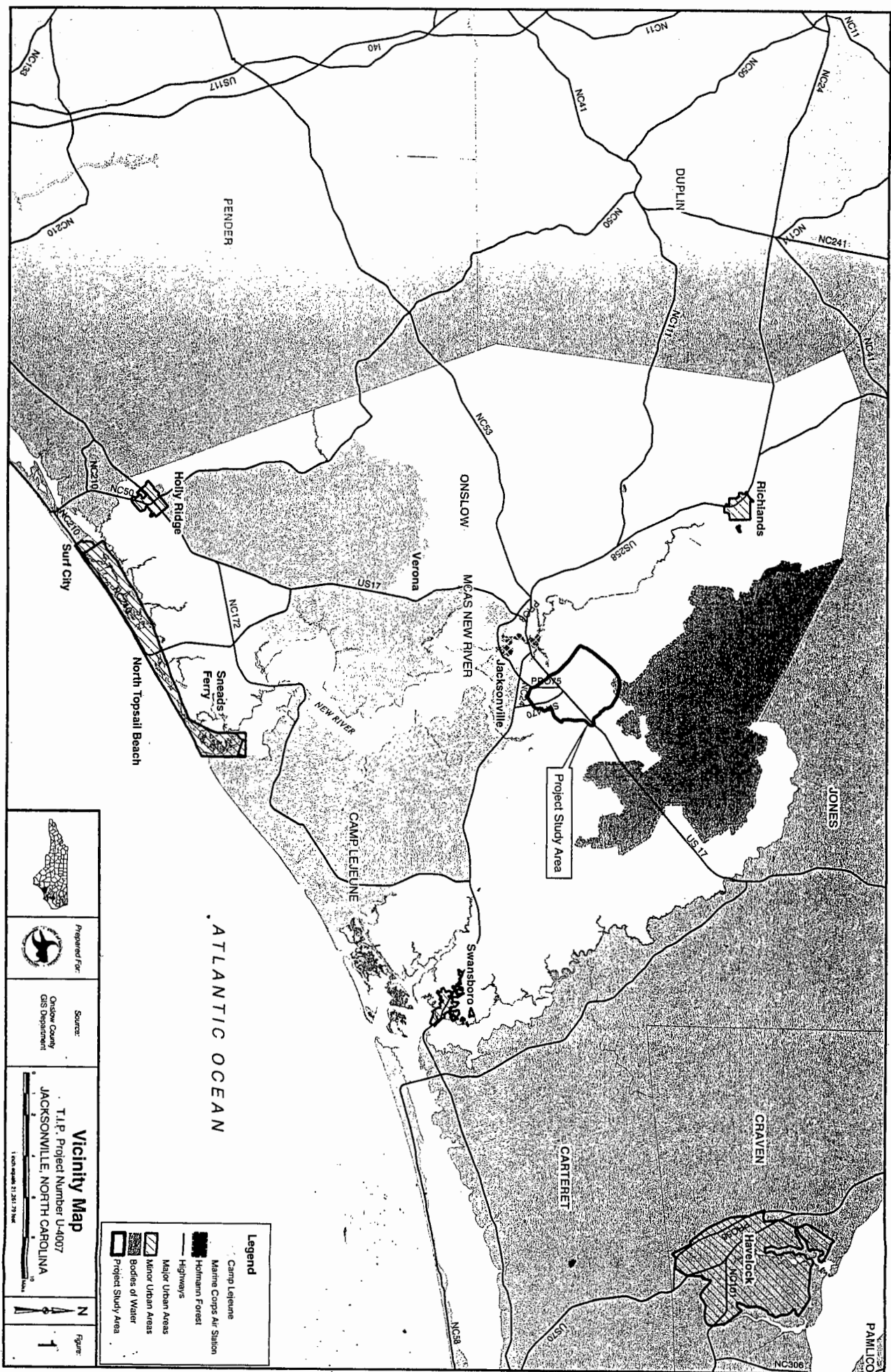
The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impacts, including cumulative impacts, of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, flood plain values (in accordance with Executive Order 11988), land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership, and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people. For activities involving the discharge of dredged or fill materials in waters of the United States, the evaluation of the impact of the activity on the public interest will include application of the Environmental Protection Agency's 404(b)(1) guidelines.

Commenting Information

The Corps is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, State and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps to determine whether to issue, modify, condition or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) and/or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

Any person may request, in writing, within the comment period specified in this notice, that a public hearing be held to consider the application. Requests for public hearings shall state, with particularity, the reasons for holding a public hearing. Requests for a public hearing shall be granted, unless the District Engineer determines that the issues raised are insubstantial or there is otherwise no valid interest to be served by a hearing.

Written comments pertinent to the proposed work, as outlined above, will be received by the Corps of Engineers, Wilmington District, until 5pm, March 5, 2007. Comments should be submitted to Ms. Jennifer Frye, US Army Corps of Engineers, Wilmington Regulatory Field Office, Post Office Box 1890, Wilmington 28402.





Legend

- † Cemetery
- ✠ Church
- ✠ School
- ✠ Fire Station
- ~ Stream
- Road
- Transmission Line
- Proposed Study Alt
- Greenway



Prepared For:

Source:
City of Jacksonville
Planning Department
& GIS Department

Alternatives
T.I.P. Project Number U-4007
JACKSONVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

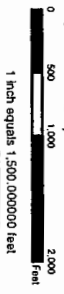
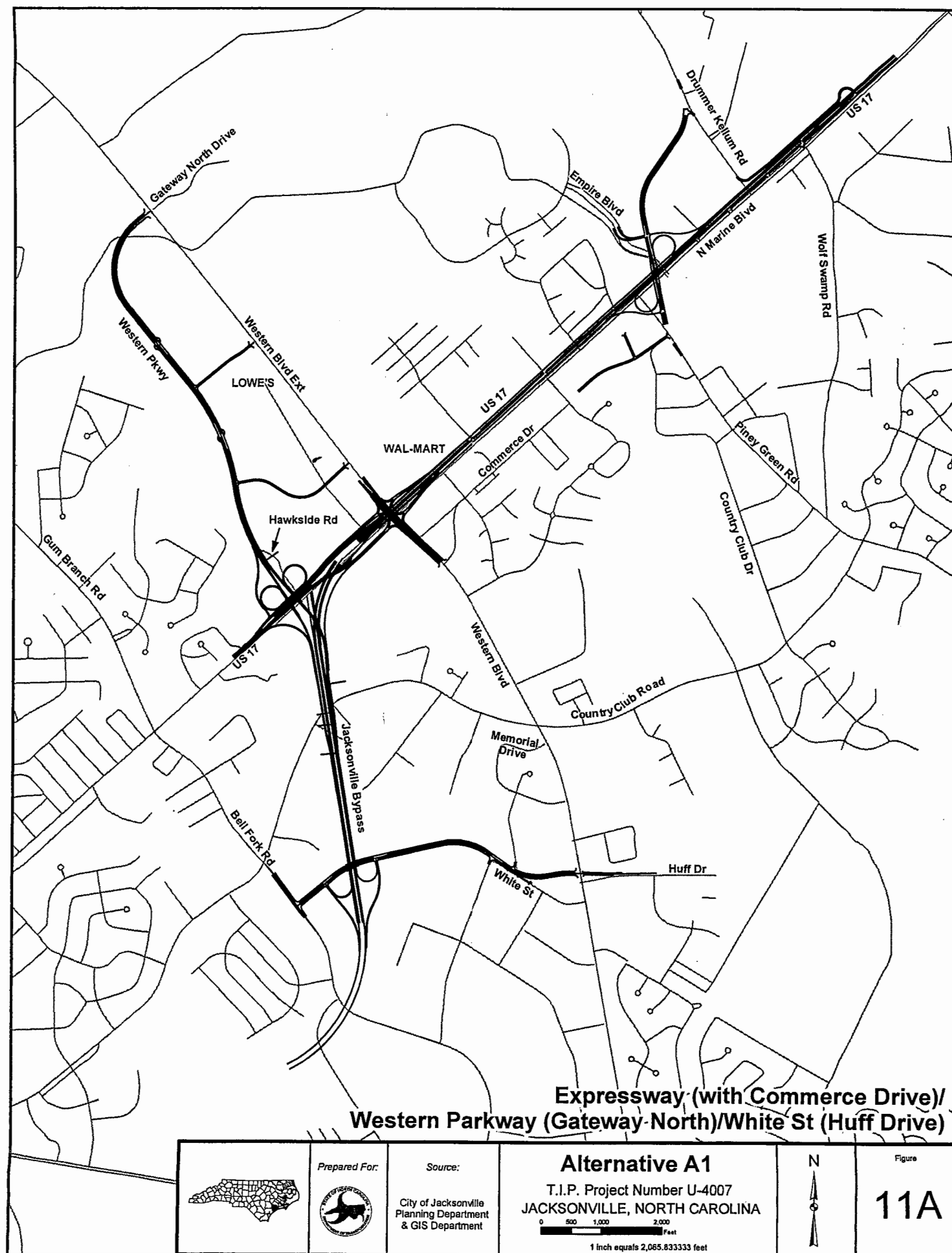
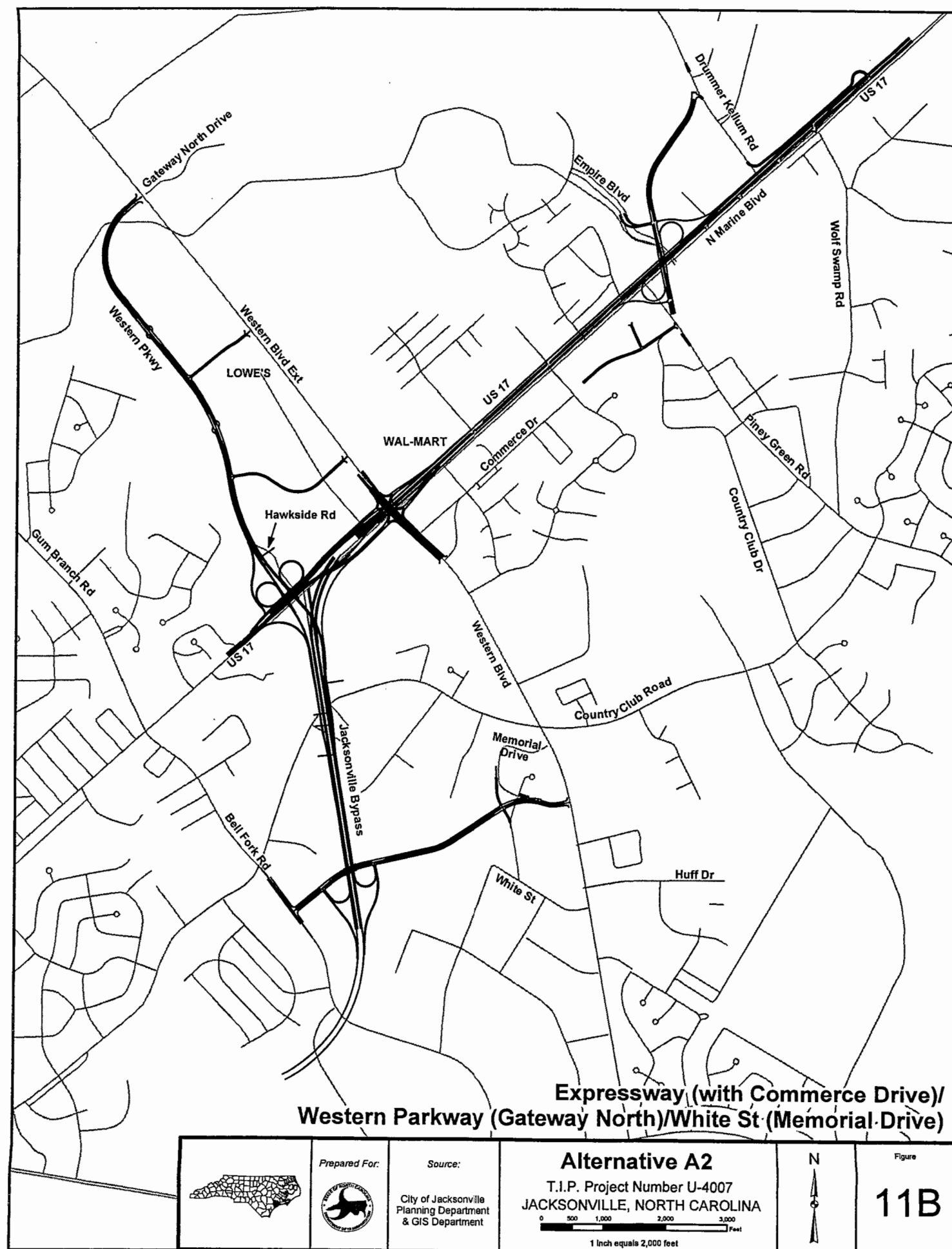
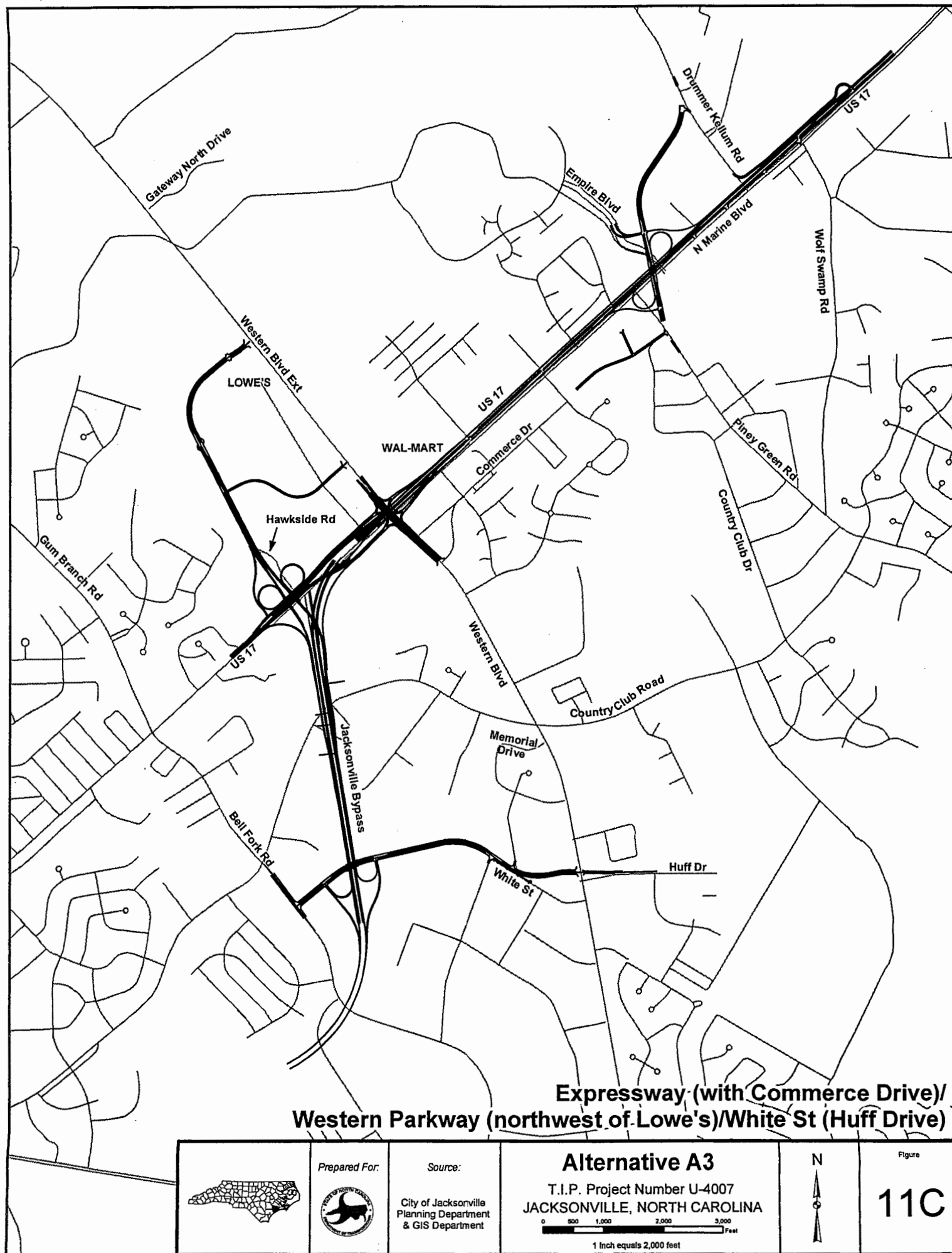






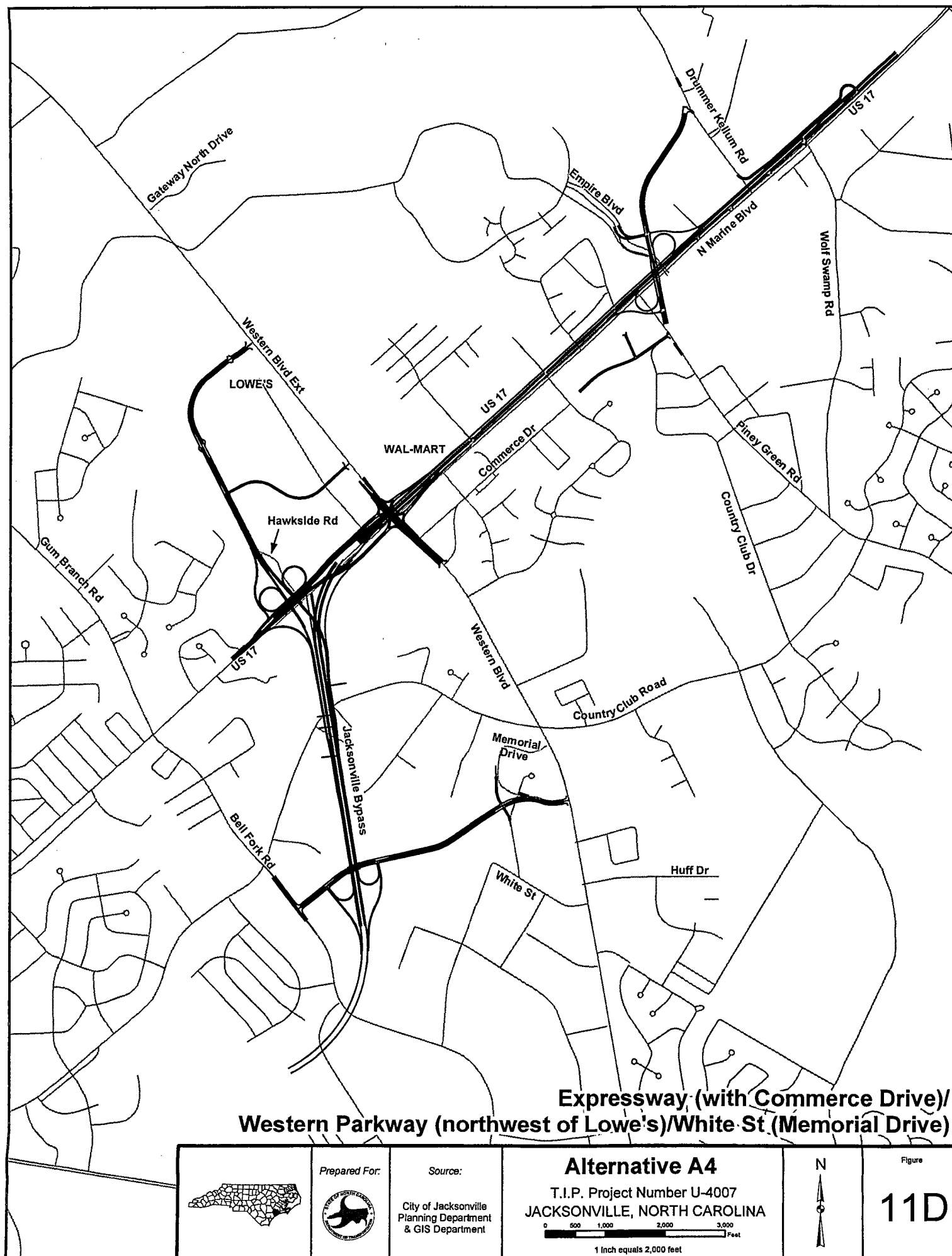
Figure
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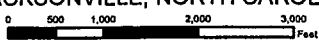



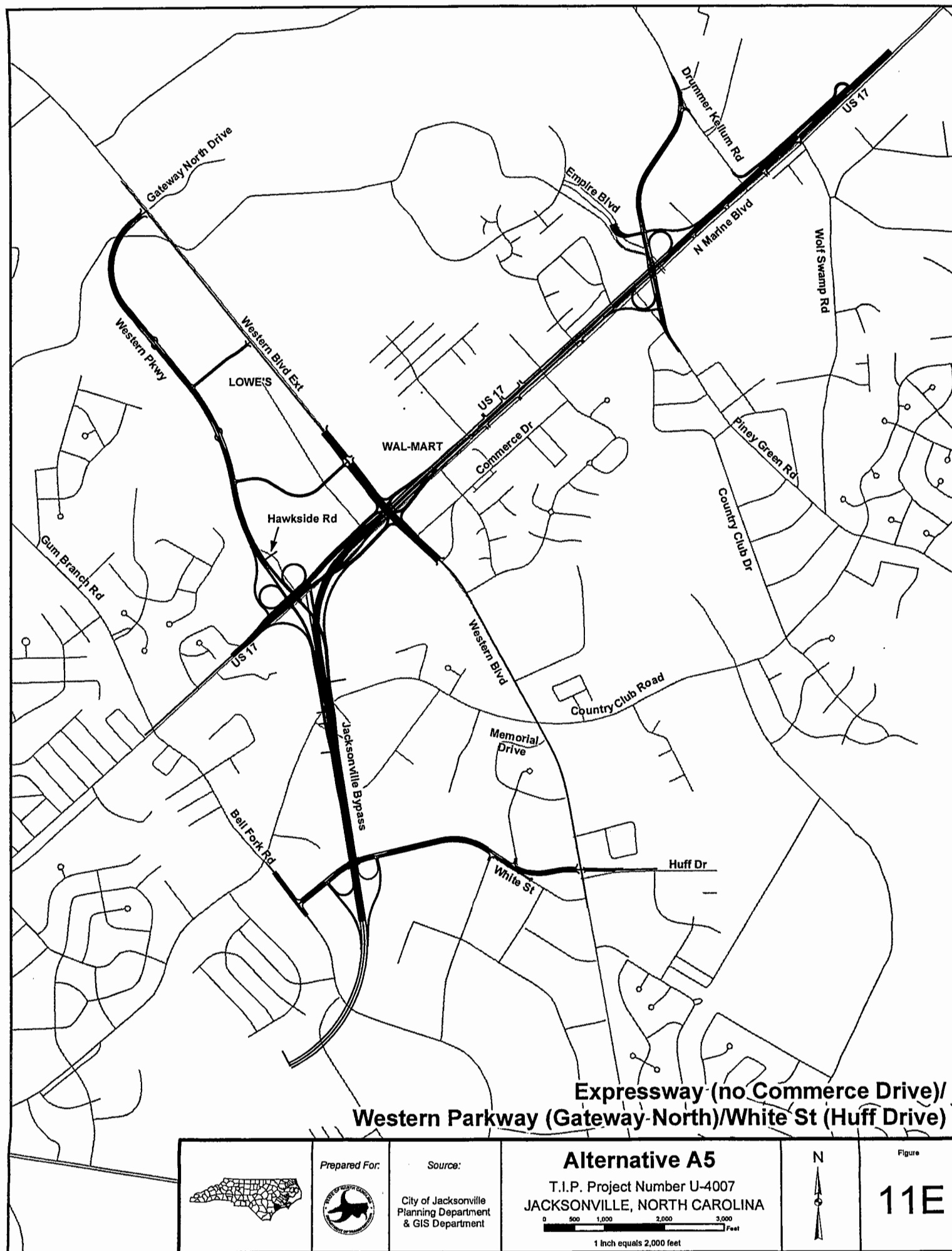


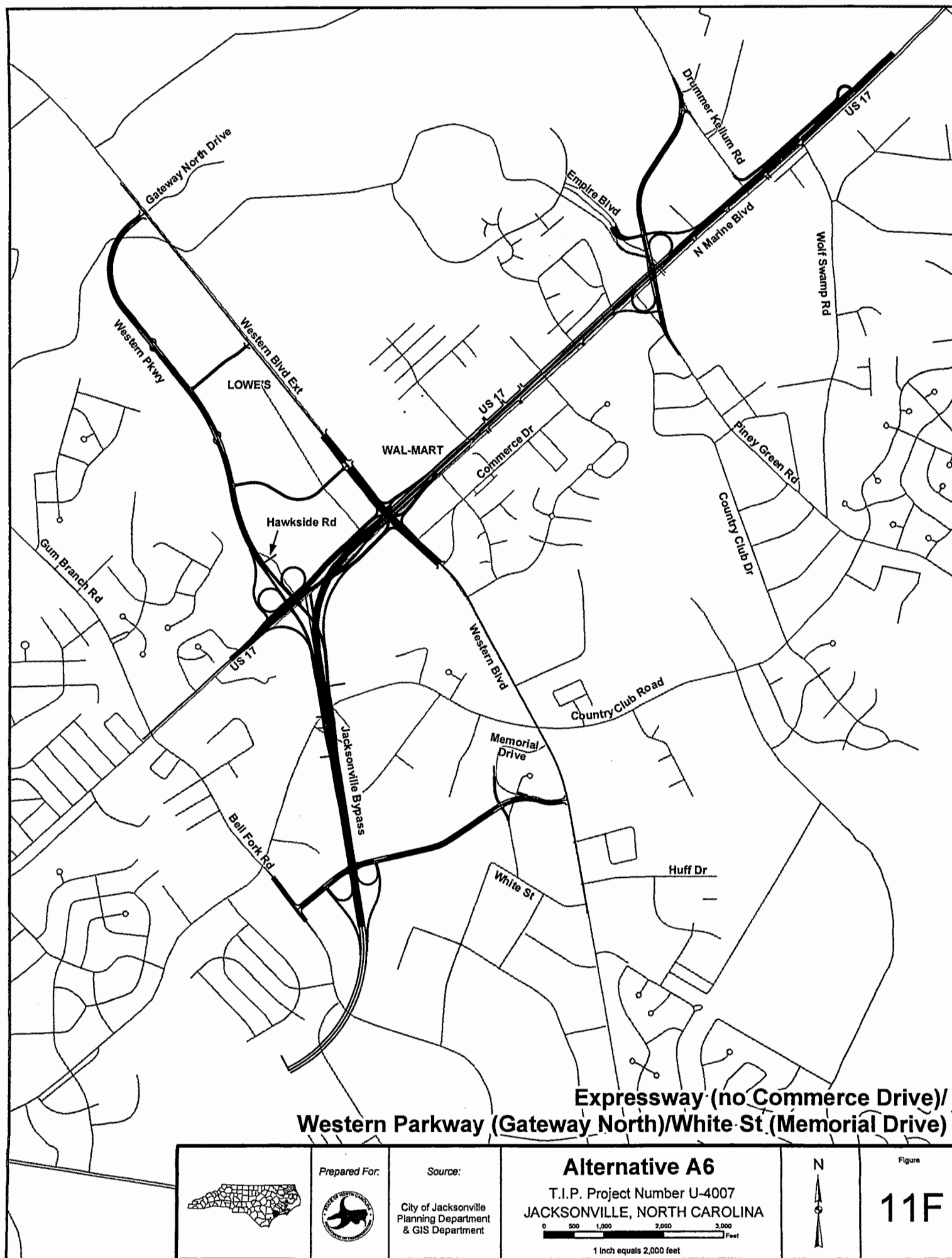


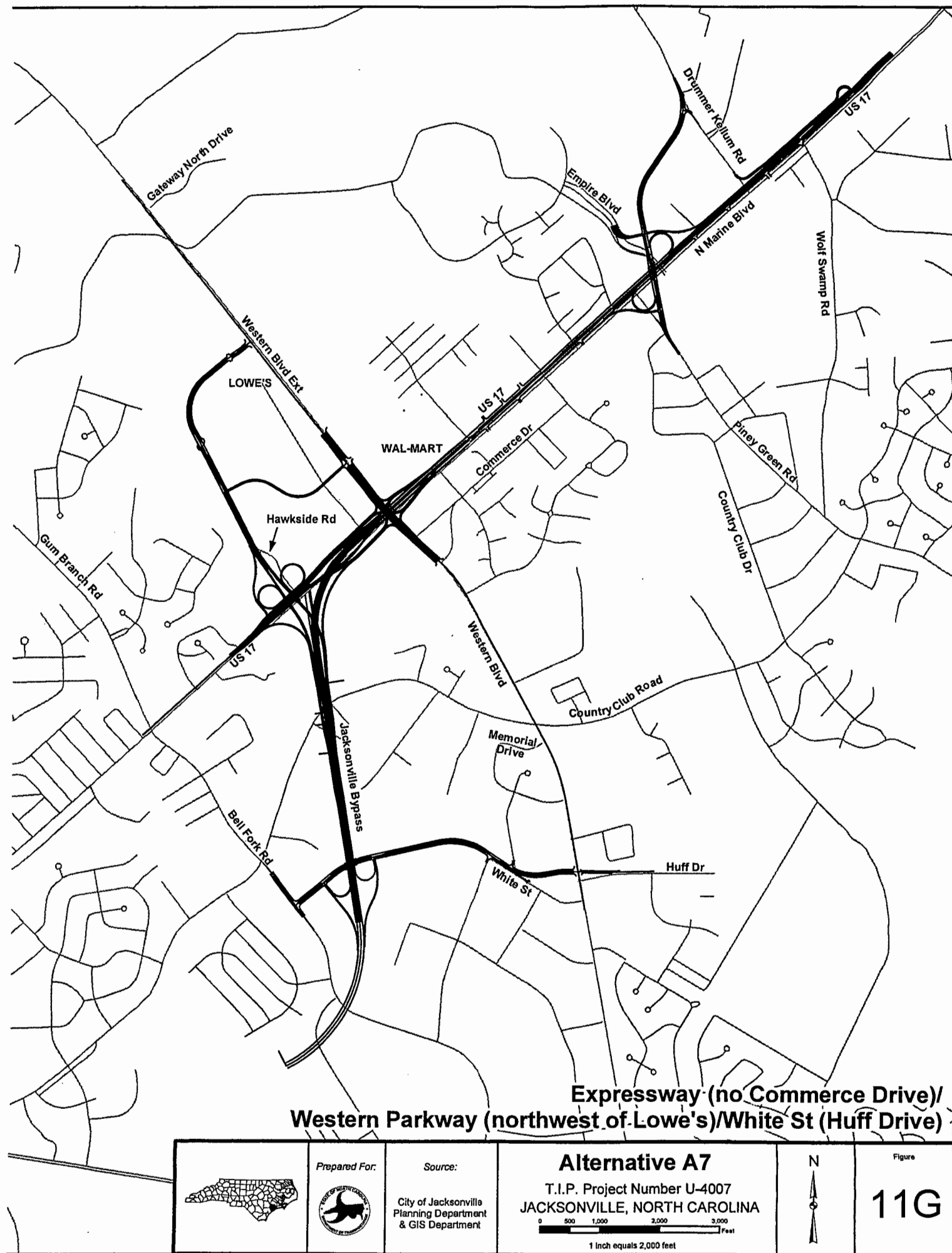
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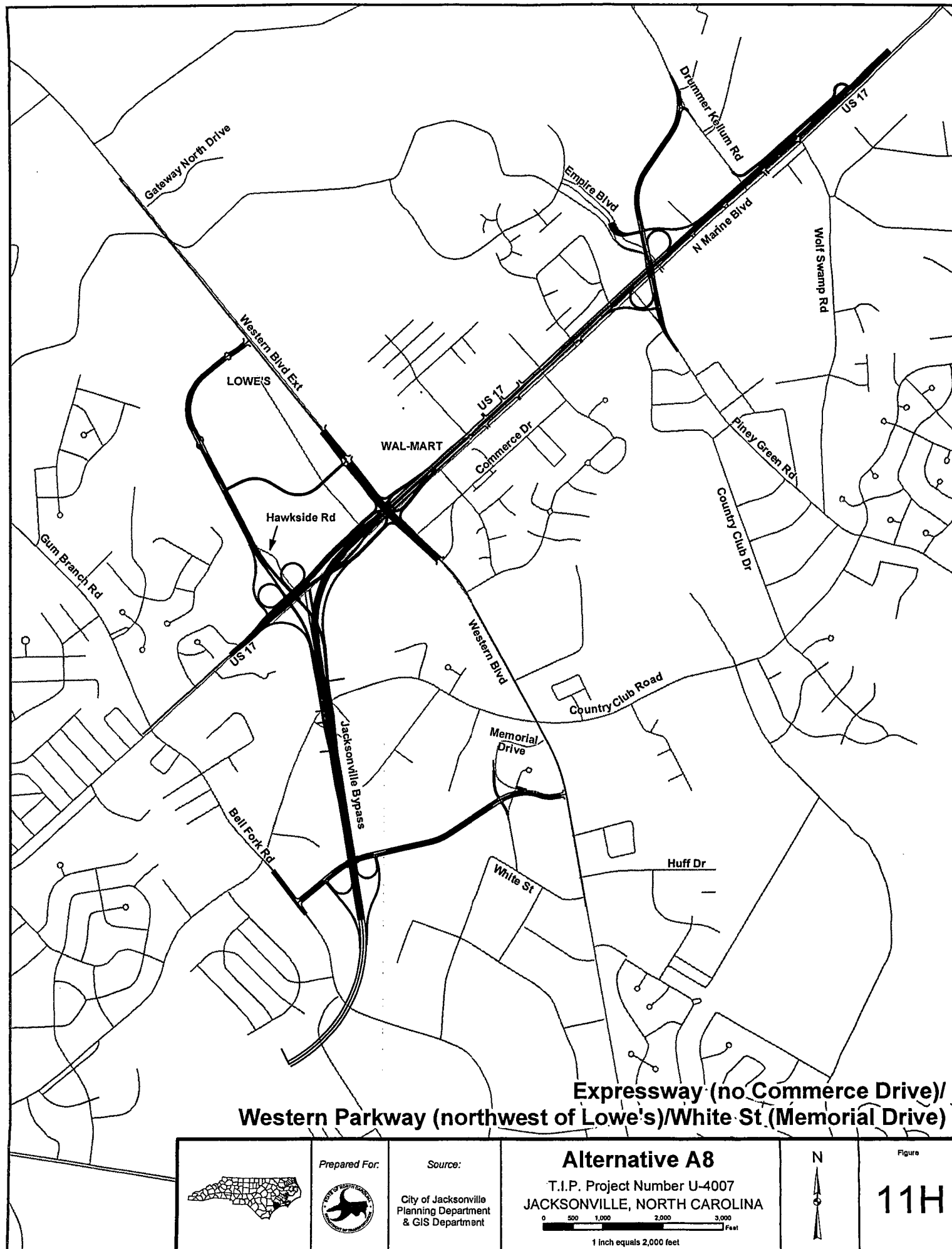


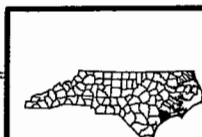
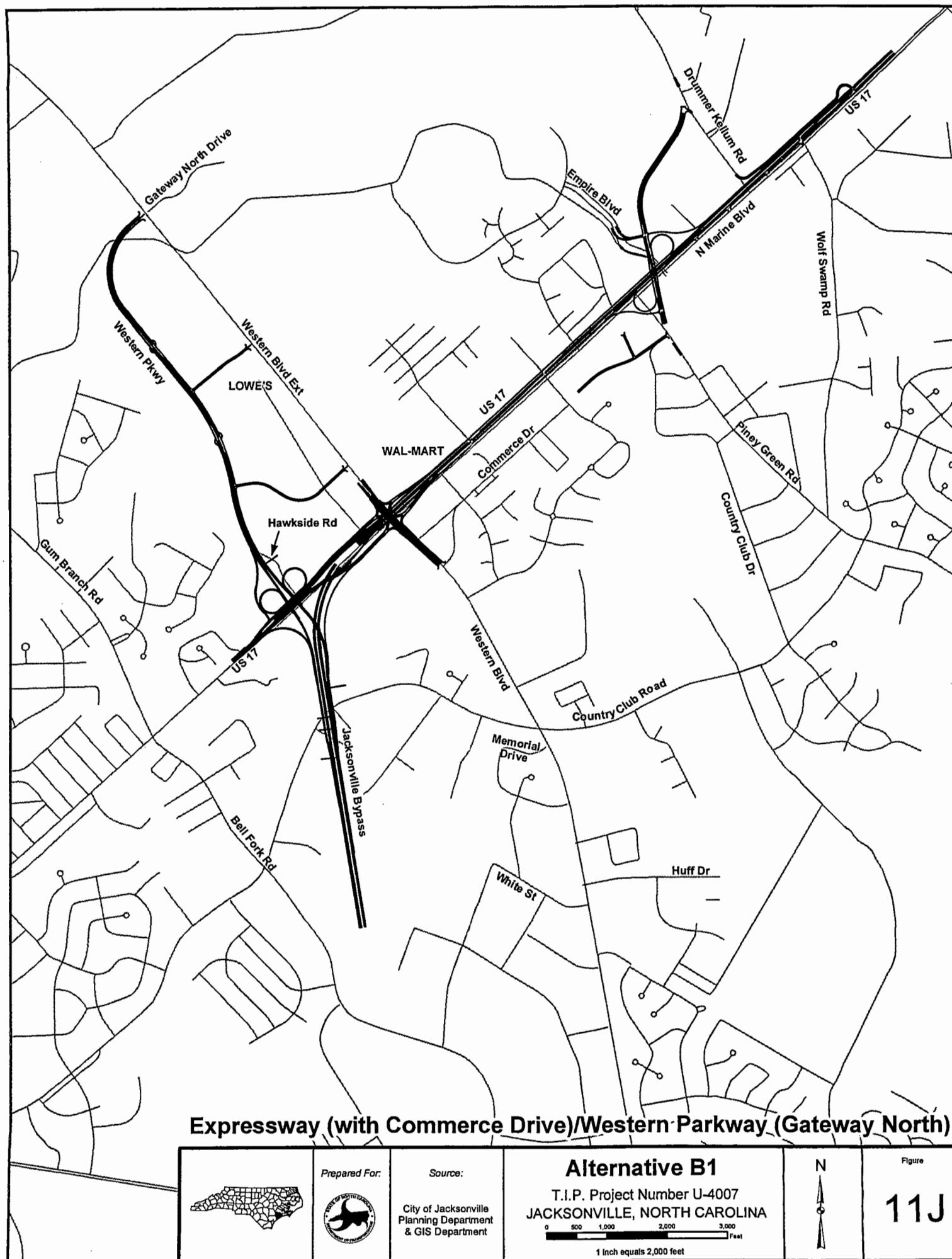
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Prepared For:



Source:

City of Jacksonville
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 & GIS Department

Alternative B1

T.I.P. Project Number U-4007
 JACKSONVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

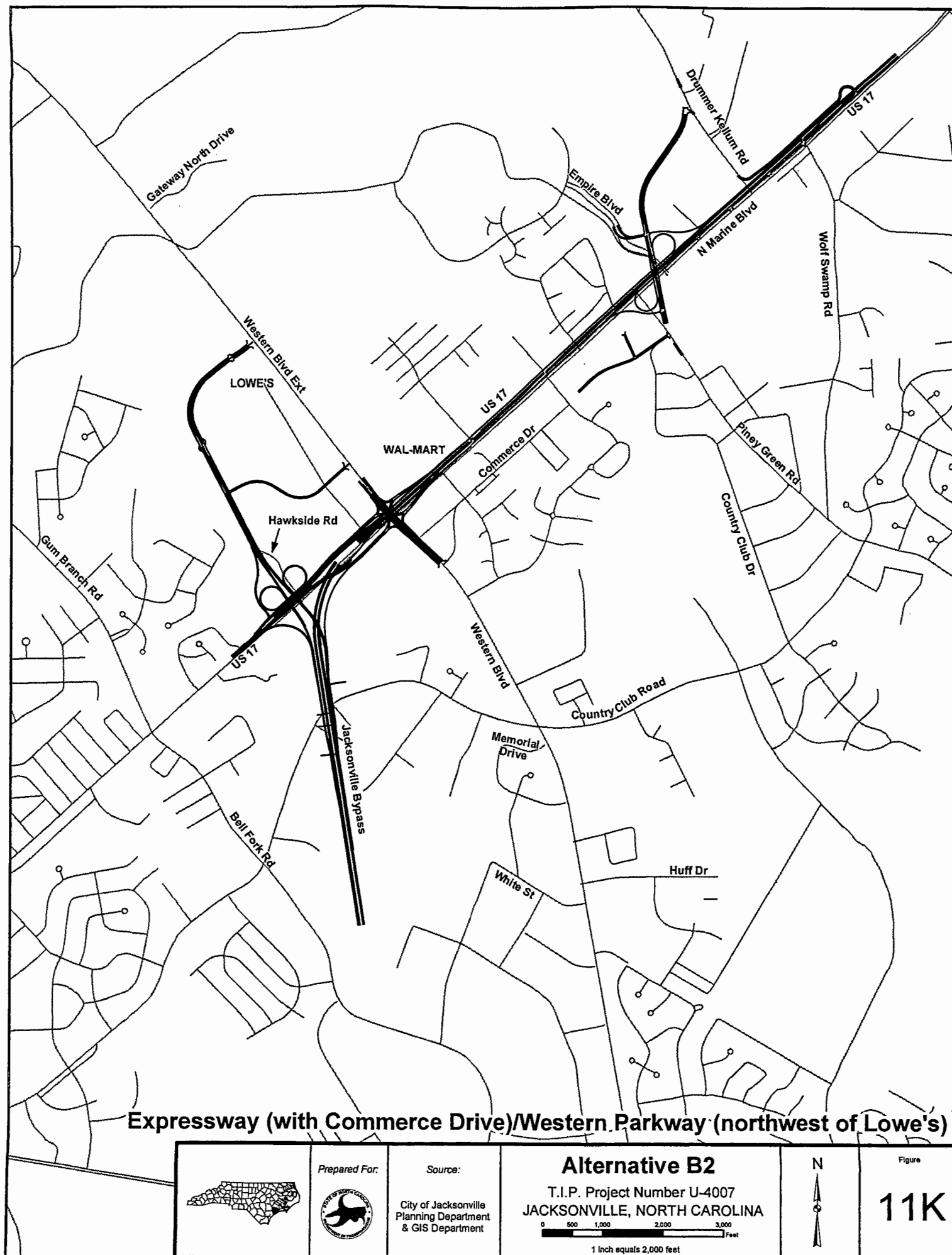
0 500 1,000 2,000 3,000 Feet

1 inch equals 2,000 feet



Figure

11J



Expressway (with Commerce Drive)/Western Parkway (northwest of Lowe's)



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Alternative B2

T.I.P. Project Number U-4007
JACKSONVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

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1 inch equals 2,000 feet







Figure

11K







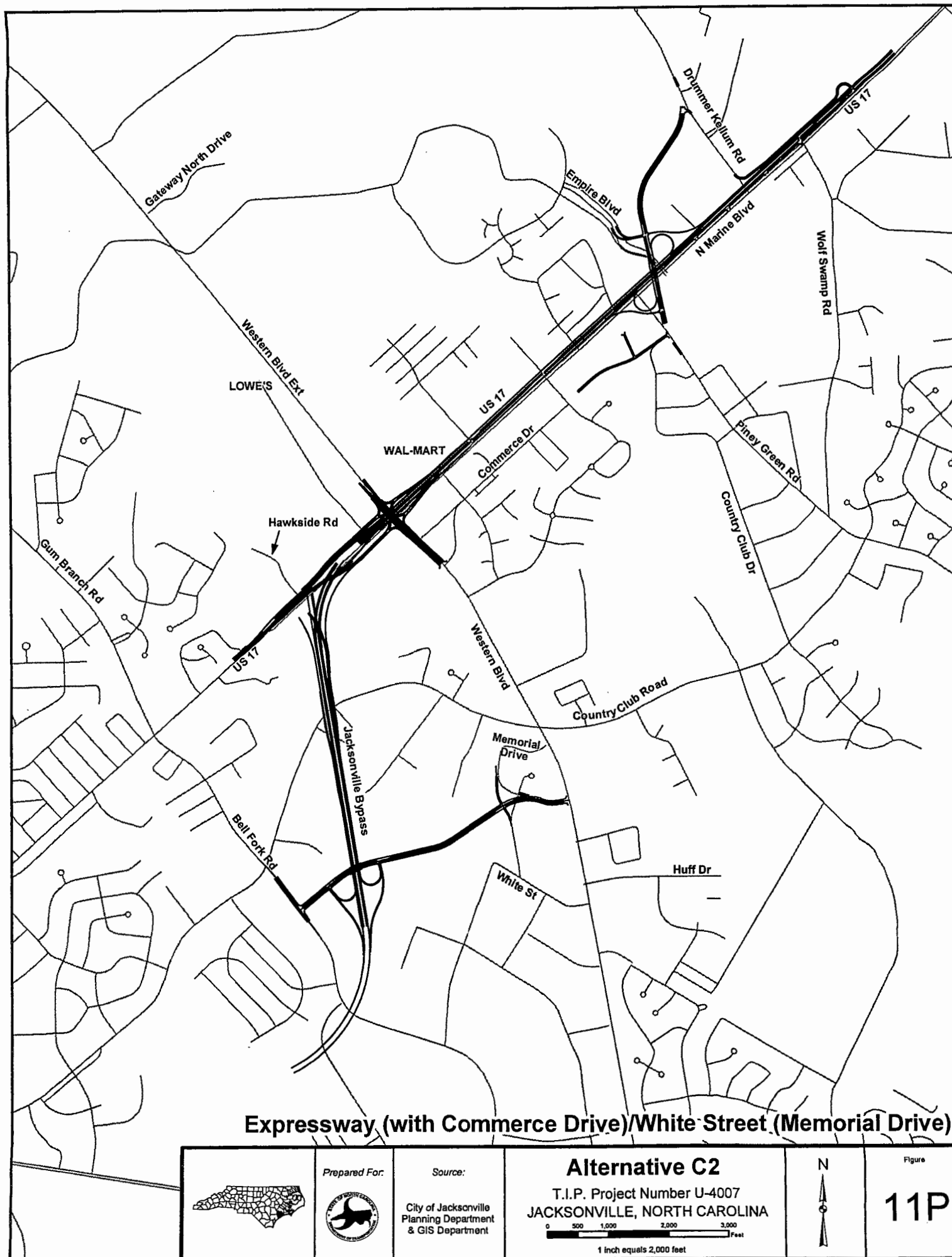
Expressway (no Commerce Drive)/Western Parkway (Gateway North)

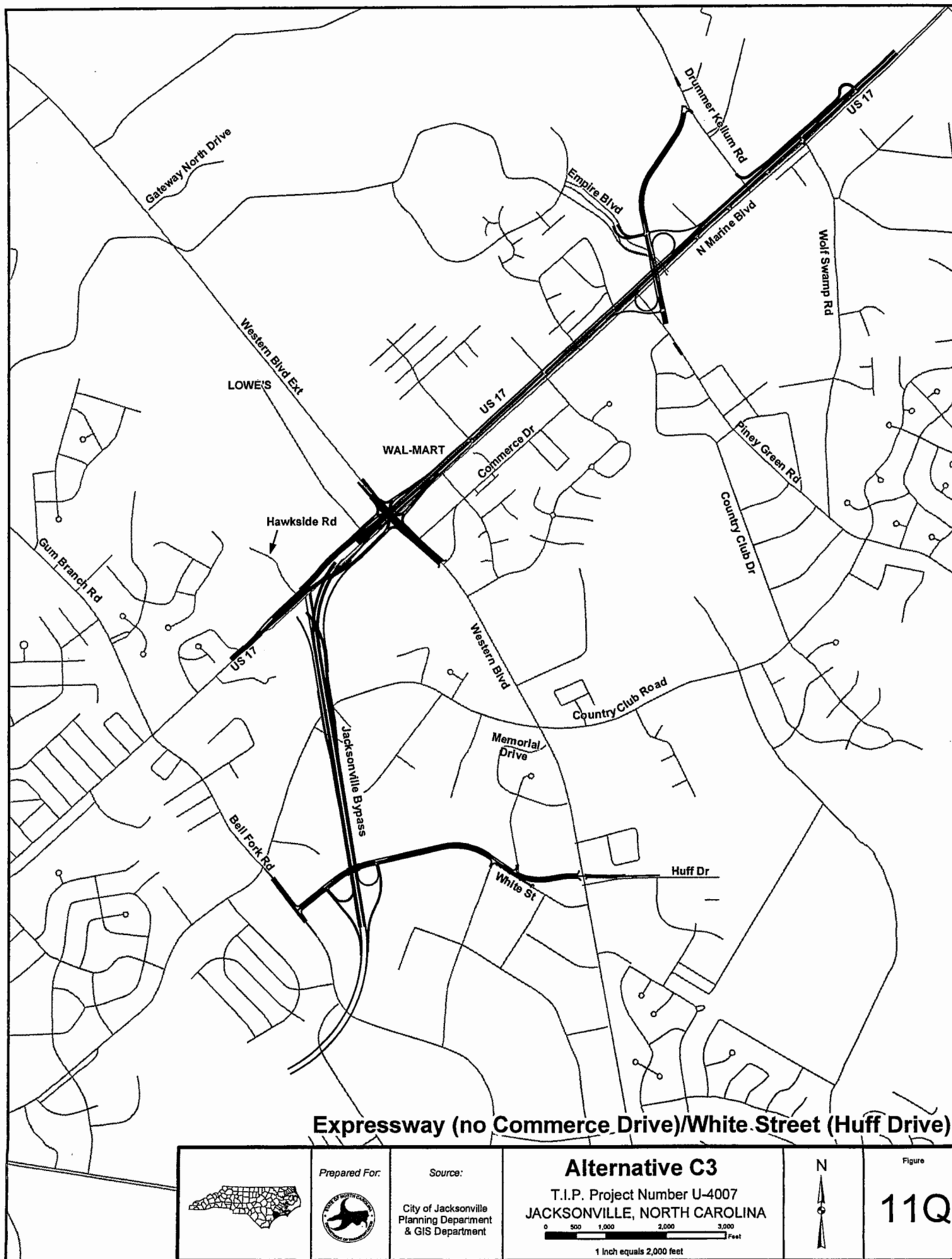
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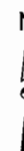


Source:

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Alternative C3

T.I.P. Project Number U-4007
 JACKSONVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA



Figure

11Q

